

To the Members of the California State Assembly:

I am returning Assembly Bill 2447 without my signature.

Although this bill has some meritorious components, it creates a new program that would potentially mandate the Department of Forestry and Fire Protection (CAL FIRE) to be directly involved with costly and time-consuming project-by-project verification for subdivisions located in State Responsibility Areas (SRAs) throughout the state. CAL FIRE should not be in the position of having to act as a local land use agency. Rather, that responsibility rests with California local governments and elected officials.

Additionally, this bill places CAL FIRE in the unenviable position of having to make written verifications as to whether or not a subdivision has “sufficient structural fire protection.” Because the bill does not define this term, competing interpretations between local government, their local fire services, and the State would certainly ensue.

CAL FIRE’s role, put simply, is to protect life, property and watersheds from the threat of fire in our state. This responsibility requires them to work cooperatively with local governments and their local fire services. I cannot compromise those important relationships by placing CAL FIRE in the inappropriate role of arbiter between local governments and their local fire services as to whether the prescribed fire protection standard is being met.

Nonetheless, the need for comprehensive fire safety protection within our state is vitally important. I look forward to working with the Legislature in the next session to pursue solutions that increase fire protection for Californians in ways that do not inappropriately combine or confuse the legitimate roles and responsibilities of the state and local governments.

For these reasons, I am returning this bill without my signature.

Sincerely,

Arnold Schwarzenegger